THE
# RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. I. February 7, 1936 Shebat 14, 5696 No. 20

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## THE STORY OF AN AWAKENED COMMUNITY

*by Louis M. Levitsky*

## MR. LEWISOHN'S MISDIRECTED ZEAL

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15 West 86th Street, New York, N. Y.

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The RECONSTRUCTIONIST is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues starting in October, by The Society for the Advancement of Judaism, 15 West 86th St., New York, N. Y. Subscription $1.00 a year; foreign $1.25; individual copy 10 cents. Entered as second class matter January 9, 1935, at the Post Office, New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.
The editorials represent the opinions of the editors only.

## EDITORIALS

### The Low Level of Jewish Responsibility

*NOTES AND NEWS* is a periodical published by the National Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds and the Bureau of Jewish Social Research. In a recent issue, Joseph Willen, Director of the Business Men's Council of the New York Federation, wrote a short paper entitled "Who Should Pay the Bill?" in which he states the thesis that the most efficient way of raising the funds necessary to maintain philanthropic institutions is to extract them from the rich. It is all very well, says Mr. Willen, to talk about "widening the base of giving," "democratic support," and to indulge in similar abstractions; but there is a job to be done, and there is only one best way of doing it.

The following issue of *Notes and News* contains a symposium on Mr. Willen's paper, in which the discussion is continued. One of the contributors to the symposium, Leo Fuller, of St. Louis, criticizes Mr. Willen for ignoring the possible income that can be derived from the middle and lower classes. He does not agree that the upper classes alone can be prevailed upon to give to charity. Mrs. Brin, the president of the National Council of Jewish Women, introduces the thought that if the poor and middle classes are not solicited, they might go off on their own campaigns, "competing and duplicating charitable organizations of their own."

And so runs this typical discussion of the problems of fund-raising in Jewish philanthropic institutions. It is enough to offend the sensibilities of any Jew who has any love for Jewish life, and of any one who looks upon a contributor to charity as a human being and not as a cash register. The coldbloodedness of the whole symposium, the low level on which such a problem is analyzed, should make us shudder for our loss of self-respect. And what is publicly printed is not all. The fact is that the problem of money-getting has been degraded even further. Leaders of Federation campaigns have appealed to the fears of the rich; they have invoked two bogeys: anti-Semitism and revolution.

One argument runs as follows: we must make this campaign a success. If we fail, anti-Semitism will break out worse than ever. We will be accused of being public charges, and the goyim will hate us because of these poor wretched Jews. If you don't want anti-Semitism to increase, help Federation. The other argument is not quite as vaguely conceived: give to the poor, give now, and generously, or else we'll have a bloody revolution and they'll take everything away from you. Mr. Willen asks us to be realistic. Let us then be realistic, and ask Mr. Willen whether these two arguments are not really the only ones that are being used to extract

the necessary amounts out of recalcitrant rich Jews.

Is this to be the permanent character of Jewish communal undertakings? Is this to be the level of Jewish responsibility? If the Federation leaders and executives believe so, then they should devote all their energies to the abolition of private philanthropy, and the institution of a complete system of governmental responsibility for the poor and the needy. Let them make a clean sweep of this whole business of private philanthropy, with its pretensions to being more "personal," and discharging unique types of services. And let them not have to rack their brains for new scares that will shake the money out of the rich.

We believe that much more would be achieved toward extracting a maximum of funds from Jews, if the remnant of mutual responsibility which Jews feel were utilized to consolidate and solidify the community. If money is extorted by threats of hatred or confiscation, that money will not be forthcoming if anything happens to weaken the force of the threats; but even when the money is given, it is given in the spirit of a bribe, of hush money, to prevent trouble. This certainly splits up the community, and widens the breach that exists between Jew and Jew, weakening and ultimately destroying the sense of responsibility that now gives whatever meager strength there is to communal campaigns.

Emphasis upon the responsibility of Jew for Jew can never come about unless each Jew has something in common with every other Jew besides similar donation-receipts. If there is no Jewish life beyond the life of charity, neither Mr. Willen nor any of his colleagues will, for long, be able to keep alive the sense of responsibility in the rising generation of the plutocracy. Again we repeat, and we shall continue to repeat, even if we court the danger of boredom and impatience in our readers: a Jewish community, dedicated to all the needs of the Jew, social, spiritual, economic, educational, must be established.

So long as Jews continue to regard other Jews as "coreligionists," when there is no common religion among them, and when, for the most part religion plays no part whatever in their lives, coldblooded and calculating methods will have to be used, and our self-respect will deteriorate more and more. When Jews learn that their common life represents a sacred social responsibility based upon the cherishing of a common past and common aspirations for the future, the problem of philanthropy will be solved with both efficiency and dignity.

## Wanted: A Philosophy of Arab-Jewish Relations

WORLD Jewry is once again agitated by the announcement that a Legislative Council will be established in Palestine. Meetings of protest have been held wherever Jews are found, while in Palestine, the High Commissioner's plan finally to effect what has been pending for more than ten years has succeeded in creating a united front of all parties from the Agudat Yisrael to the radical Labor wing in opposition to the project.

As far back as 1922, the Palestine government sought to create such a Council, and met with fierce opposition from both the Arabs and the Jews. Since that time, the question of the Legislative Council has been discussed and each time, both the Arabs and the Jews have exerted sufficient pressure against it to have the matter tabled.

Ostensibly, the British government is attempting to carry out the provisions of the mandate which call for the establishment of self-governing agencies in the land. The Arabs have objected because concession would have been tantamount to the acknowledgment that the Jews have a right to Palestine; this right they have never been willing to acknowledge. The Jews have objected because the establishment of a Legislative Council would render the

Jewish population a helpless minority in Palestine, and make their position there no different from what it has been in the lands of the diaspora. Although the powers of the Legislative Council would not include that of controlling immigration, and although the High Commissioner would have broad powers of veto, the danger of crystallizing the process of establishing the Jewish National Home at this early stage in its development seemed a real one. And Zionists felt that it was within their rights to protest the realization of one of the provisions of the mandate (self-government) if it was achieved at the expense of the other and equally important provision, namely, that a homeland be established in Palestine for the Jewish people.

The argument has been advanced that, while the Council would have very limited powers, it would provide the necessary opportunity for Jews and Arabs to get together and reach a better understanding. But the Zionists, especially the Labor Zionists, realize that they can accomplish more in this direction by the organization of Arab workers and sympathetic cooperation with them; that the contact of Jews and Arabs in a Council would only provide new opportunities for friction and irritation.

We agree wholeheartedly with the Zionist world in its unyielding opposition to the plan as it is at present formulated, and we appreciate the fact that the longer the establishment of a Council is postponed by means of such unified resistance, the stronger the Jewish position in Palestine becomes and the better the terms which the Palestine government offers. The truth of the latter point is evident from a comparison of the original plan under the administration of Sir Herbert Samuel and that presented today under Wauchope. But we do maintain that these postponements cannot go on forever, that eventually some kind of parliamentary system will be instituted, and that we Jews must begin now to envisage that system. We must clarify our whole philosophy of our relationship to the Arab population.

For years, we have neglected the Arab problem. At first, we ignored the Arabs; when that course of action proved unrealistic, sporadic attempts were made to win over the oppressed fellaheen; in recent periods of prosperity, when Arabs were benefiting from Jewish enterprise, the Arab problem became quiescent in the face of apparent Arab conciliation. But the problem still remains; and unless a clearly thought out program of cooperation is evolved, the problem will remain to plague us. At the very moment that we are expressing our wholehearted disapproval of the proposed Council, we should be working on a long range view of this question. The Arabs in Palestine are undoubtedly there to stay; we are determined that we are there to stay. Let us then think the matter through, and be prepared to submit an alternative plan the next time this perennial attempt is made to establish the Council.

## A Rapprochement With The Yiddishists

ANNOUNCEMENT has been made of a new Yiddish periodical. Under the leadership of Haim Zhitlowsky and a group of Yiddishists, this journal will be dedicated to the advancement of Yiddish life and letters. We greet this announcement joyfully, because it represents an evidence on the part of Jews of the will to live as Jews. Every new project of a cultural nature enriches our Jewish lives and adds to the all too few rewards in store for those who seek in Jewish life a source of stimulation and enlightenment.

We wish, however, to take this opportunity to express our disappointment at the continued aloofness and estrangement that characterizes the relationship between the Yiddishists and the rest of American Jewry. The casual observer, unacquainted with the intricacies and subtleties of Jewish life in our country, might easily imagine that the Yiddishists constituted

an entirely separate nation, so little have most Jews in common with the Yiddishists. We venture to guess that large elements of American Jewry are not even aware of the whole Yiddishist movement, of its schools, its periodicals, its vast system of social and educational forces. If there were frequent clashes of opinion, disagreements, debates, exchanges of thought, the situation might not be so deplorable. Yiddishists are almost completely insulated from the rest of American Jewry.

Unfortunately, there is a mistaken impression abroad about the Yiddishists. Jews who have never troubled to investigate thoroughly imagine that all Yiddishists are communists, who utilize Yiddish for the sole purpose of alienating Jews from their Jewish heritage; that, like the early socialists among Jewish immigrants, they are conceding to the use of the Yiddish language only as a means of instructing the masses in the principles of a socialist faith; that this movement is intended only for the interregnum, as a sort of transitional device. The prevalence of Yiddish among the Jews of Russia and the projection of a territorial concentration in Biro-Bidjan have added to this popular misapprehension.

In truth, the Yiddishist movement is a thoroughly Jewish movement. The movement, founded in 1908 in Czernowitz, was originally designed to combat the assimilation of Jews and their culture. Its adherents are vitally concerned with the cultural life of the Jewish people. Their schools teach the content of the Jewish heritage with perhaps a greater degree of thoroughness and understanding than most of our Sunday and Hebrew schools. Yiddishists observe the festivals and commemorations of the Jewish people with greater enthusiasm and eclat than most of the Americanized Jews. And the interest and support which the Yiddishists have displayed in regard to the upbuilding of Palestine leaves no doubt as to their preoccupation with the renaissance of our people's civilization.

All these things we have in common with the Yiddishists. Why then are we so distant from them, and why are they so estranged from us? Is it not a shame that we are not touched by their vitality and devotion? Is it not a pity that we should have allowed the years to pass without taking some concerted action toward a closer relationship? It is high time that a rapprochement was effected. How this can be achieved it is not the purpose of this editorial to prescribe; but some of the prerequisites for such a rapprochement can be indicated.

In the first place, some attempt will have to be made to hurdle the obstacle of language. Most American Jews, who have not been exposed to the forces of the Yiddishist movement, have lost all touch with the Yiddish language. Although there are still thousands of our people who understand Yiddish but won't admit it, the majority have grown up without a knowledge of the language. In some quarters, indeed, a revival of Yiddish has taken place; Jews aware of the literary and dramatic works of art produced in Yiddish have actually set about learning the tongue. People who saw "Yoshe Kalb" and missed most of it, suddenly realized how necessary it was to know Yiddish. But on the whole, Yiddish has lost its hold on most Jews. A rapprochement, therefore, might begin with a move toward acquiring a knowledge of Yiddish.

On the other hand, the more universal and older Hebrew language would serve the purpose better. Yiddishists, on the whole, know Hebrew better than Americanized Jews. The latter might make a serious attempt to find a common meeting ground with the Yiddishists, as well as with all Jewry, in a knowledge of Hebrew. In any case, however, the seriousness of the language problem cannot be minimized.

A second factor in a rapprochement must be the abolition of that spurious sense of social superiority which most

American Jews experience as a result of their ignorance of Yiddish and their dissociation from Yiddish speaking Jews. This evil we have inherited from the pernicious feud that has existed between the Eastern and Western European Jews, and from the condescension with which the so-called German Jews have looked down upon the "Russian" Jews. False standards of social level have been inculcated into American Jews as a result of the whole Plymouth Rock tradition; they presuppose that superiority lies in the date of arrival to the shores of this land. And since the German immigration wave preceded the Eastern-European, it is more desirable to identify oneself with the German group.

As a result, a cleavage in American Jewry has existed which has no roots in ideological formulations, but in social standards. It is time that we outgrew this childishness. No rapprochement with the Yiddishists, certainly, can be achieved unless we do so.

Those who are seriously interested in the consolidation of American Jewry, and the unification of our powers of survival and growth, should take it upon themselves to arrange for the leaders of the Yiddishist movement and the leaders of other phases of Jewish life to come together and discuss the ways and means by which a closer relationship may be realized.

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# The Story of An Awakened Community

*By* Louis M. Levitsky

## Introduction

THIS is the story of a Conservative Congregation which was organized 13 years ago in one of the smaller communities in the east, and which today has a membership of 240 families; which has doubled the allotment for educational work since 1929; which has increased its educational budget each of the last five years until in 1935-36 $13,500 out of a total of $34,000 is devoted to educational work (this figure includes only teachers' salaries and no part of the salaries of any of the rest of the personnel who help maintain the school building and educational program); which feels so keenly the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of its young people that an appropriation was made this year to enable the rabbi to make a pastoral tour of 28 colleges in 23 different cities which are attended by the 55 young people in the Congregation in order to meet the young people in their school environment.

## The Place of The Jews in The Community

The Community is Wilkes-Barre, Pa. The Congregation is Temple Israel. The area referred to as Wilkes-Barre in this report contains a population of about 120,000 of whom about 5,000 are Jews. The main industry in this community is the mining and shipping of anthracite coal. The auxiliary industry is silk manufacturing. There are no Jews whatsoever connected with the mining industry in any of its phases—as laborers, as operators, as shippers. The most plausible explanation for this condition is that the actual mining is considered in the same category as labor and Jews are not given to mine labor any more than to any other kind of labor; ownership of mines calls for excessive outlays of money before any profits are seen, and Jews are said not to have patience with such long range investments; shipping of coal is in the hands of a few very large concerns associated with the mining companies and these

have no Jews connected with them. As for the silk industry, the owners of the small plants are Jews who are non-residents. The large silk mills are in non-Jewish hands. The silk mills engage female help, and there are no Jewish girls working there. There are a few shirt and overall factories owned by Jews but the labor is all female and all non-Jewish. The largest bakery in this region is owned by a Jew. It is the only plant in the community in which there are Jewish employees. Practically the entire Jewish population is engaged in the retail business. A great many of them began and some still maintain their stores around the mines. It happens that, with one exception, both the wholesale and retail furniture business is in Jewish hands.

The 5000 souls comprising the Jewish community represent a stable population. There is little migration. Practically all the Jews have been living here so long that very few, even among the oldest residents, are unable to speak English. The floating population consists only of the local managers of national chain stores, of which there are an unduly large number and whose representatives happen to be preponderantly Jewish. They are changed very frequently.

The number of young people going away to college increases each year. In Temple Israel alone, for example, the number of young people at college increased from 11 in 1922 to 55 in 1935. There is a tendency on the part of some of these young people to seek permanent residence elsewhere. There are 14 Jewish physicians, 6 Jewish dentists, 1 Jewish engineer, and 15 Jewish lawyers, most of the latter having begun practice only within the last five years.

### The Jewish Communal Picture in 1922

There are three distinct strata that make up the Jewish population, and until about 15 years ago were clearly distinguishable. There are the Jews of German extraction who were the first to come here about 100 years ago. They founded the first Synagogue, which is now the Reform Temple, whose membership to this day consists largely of the descendants of the early families. The East European immigration in the last quarter of the last century brought to Wilkes-Barre two streams which have been kept distinct—the Jews from Hungary and those from Russia and Poland. The first group organized what is popularly called "The Hungarian Synagogue" which until about 20 years ago contained a clause in its constitution excluding Jews who were not of Hungarian extraction from membership in the Congregation. The Russian and Polish Jews organized four synagogues, the divisions being determined by their respective places of origin. These are still known popularly as the Prener Shul, Vizaner Shul, etc.

Outside of these six synagogues there were in the Jewish community in 1922 three Ladies' Aid Societies—one representing each of the three strata of the Jewish community referred to above. These three women's groups cooperated with each other very little. Each went its own way. The Council of Jewish Women and the Independent Order B'nai B'rith, while supposedly representing every group of Jewry, in reality were directed then by Jews of German extraction, even though the membership of these groups was largely made up of Eastern European Jews. The latter group also had a large number of branches of various Jewish national fraternal organizations, such as I.O.B.A., which are now practically extinct. There was also an active Workmen's Circle group housed in their own modest building.

There was a Hebrew Free Loan and Sheltering Aid Society that functioned tolerably well with a limited capital of only a few thousand dollars. The Y.M.H.A. was housed then as now in a very fine building. The activities were limited and only a relatively small number of members ever took advantage of the building.

In the field of Jewish education there

existed then the Talmud Torah which in reality has been from the very beginning an adjunct of the Orthodox Synagogues under the supervision of the Orthodox rabbi, although their membership and directorate always consisted largely of men and women whose children do not attend the Talmud Torah. There were about 150 children in that institution. The Y.M.H.A. maintained a branch of the Talmud Torah in its building and provided Hebrew instruction to about 35 children. The Reform Congregation had a Sunday School of about 100 children, many of whom were drawn from the Orthodox families. In addition there was a small school containing about 25 or 30 children who received Yiddish instruction in the Workmen's Circle. The last named school exists no longer.

### Temple Israel Organized

This is the picture of the Jewish Community when Temple Israel was organized in the fall of 1922. The new Congregation set for itself the task of introducing into the community a sense of dignity in a traditional religious service, a three-day week Religious School with a well trained staff, an educational program to include every member of every family, and a point of view of Jewish life which would look forward to an integrated American Jewish Community instead of the perpetuation of distinctions based upon lands of origin. It met for the first two years in the Y.M.H.A., and paid rent.

The Religious Service was of immediate concern. From the very beginning nothing was started unless the Congregation was ready to do it thoroughly. They therefore introduced at the very first Friday night and Rosh ha-Shanah services uniform Prayer Books, uniform size *talesim,* and at the very first service introduced congregational singing. From the outset there was a volunteer choir, who were and continue to be responsible for fine congregational singing. It was felt that there was a large enough number of men and women in the congregation with sufficient talent that could be developed, and at the same time this choir would help develop an appreciation of Jewish music. The volunteer choir has been growing considerably, until today their number is large enough to provide ample rotating talent for the Holyday Services and Friday evening services. Efforts were made to make the Sabbath morning service more intelligible both to the women who never attended a Sabbath morning service before, and to the increasing number of men who learned to come to the Sabbath morning service. One of the most fruitful experiments was a running Midrashic commentary in English on the portion of the week that was being read. This was mimeographed each week and distributed to those present at the service, so that they were able to follow the English commentary if they were not able to follow the text of the Bible in Hebrew or did not care to follow its translation in English.

The young people are encouraged by the fact that rarely does anyone but a High School boy have the honor of reading the Haftarah. Instead of the 145th Psalm, each week a different portion of the Bible related either to the Sidrah or to the occasion, is read in English before *Musaf.* The fact that the services conclude every Sabbath at 11 o'clock makes it possible for a considerable number of men to attend it. Incidentally, in the whole congregation of about 250 families there are not one-half dozen men who are not compelled to go to business on Saturday. More recently a ten-minute review of Jewish news of the week has been introduced at the late Friday night services.

There is a Junior Synagogue that takes care of the children below the age of 13. The same Prayer Book is used as that from which the adults worship. It makes the children feel that it is the same kind of a service. The whole service is in charge of the children themselves. There is a considerable group who can read the services, another group who can read the Torah (to which only three children are called up), and a group who can explain every

part of the service as it progresses. No sermons are preached. The leader of the service is one of the Hebrew School teachers, a graduate of the Teachers Institute. His part in the service consists of preparing the children for it and of telling a story related either to the reading of the Torah or to the occasion of the day. The children join the adults in the main service whenever there is a Bar Mitzvah. Girls participate equally with the boys in the conduct of the service, except in the case of the *hazan.* The service lasts an hour and is so timed as to conclude at the same time when the adults' service concludes.

### Department of Extension Education

The first educational effort was the Department of Extension Education for Adults. The very first year that the congregation was organized, before it was in a position to have any classes or engage any teachers or even before there was any accommodations for the purpose, the first unit of the adult education department was organized. As a matter of fact, the adult classes were conducted for two years before a High School class was organized. It was only after both the adult and High School classes proved satisfactory and after the grown-ups were impressed with the importance of Jewish learning, that the Religious School was organized. The parents were then well prepared to appreciate the importance of religious training and to accept a curriculum in the Religious School with which they were not familiar.

The first adult group consisted of 10 men and women. The personnel of this group was such as to inspire a desire for emulation. Everyone of them was a college graduate, and three of them were professional people. Each of them was recognized as a leader in his and her respective group, and a few have always been recognized as intellectual and communal leaders. There was a young attorney who was at that time President of the Y.M.H.A. and whose ability was recognized by everybody then, and who today is a member of the Public Service Commission of the State of Pennsylvania; a woman, not a member of the congregation, but whose personality and whose deep intellectual interest have made her for a long time one of the outstanding intellectual forces in the community as well as in the whole State of Pennsylvania; a prominent physician whose interest in Jewish intellectual life was generally recognized.

#### a. The Intensive Study Group

From this one group of 10 people 13 years ago, there developed gradually a department which last year consisted of eight study circles, each meeting once a week for a period varying from one to two and one-half hours. One of these groups deserves detailed description as an indication of what can be accomplished with a determined effort, and what effect such a unit can have upon a community. Six years ago a group of young married women were learning how to read the Siddur. When they learned it at the end of six weeks, they took to writing. At the end of another three weeks, after they accomplished both reading and writing, they decided to continue their studies in the hope of being able sometime to read modern Hebrew literature. With this goal ahead of them, the group met for two hours every Thursday afternoon. They began studying some elementary Hebrew poetry, progressed from that to a little more advanced verse, and from that to a study of some of the better known and most frequently quoted passages of the Bible, and from then on, for the last two years, have been in a position to study some of the more advanced work of the contemporary Hebrew poets. This work is all done in Hebrew; home work is expected. Note-books are carefully kept. No student can possibly do the homework in less than five hours a week, and with only rare exceptions, everybody does it regularly each week. One of the more interesting aspects of this group is the

effort at translating into English verse some of the Hebrew poetry that is studied.

Some of the subjects studied continue from year to year, while others change each year. In the first group belong the women's Bible class in English, classes in Elementary Hebrew reading and writing, classes in Jewish history. In the latter belong the group which studied in successive years the "Khuzari" in English, the "Guide for the Perplexed," "Judaism as a Civilization," Bruno Lasker's "Jewish Experiences in America." At different times the History of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies, the Development of the Prayer Book, Medieval Hebrew Poetry and the History of Palestine were studied.

The total enrollment in these classes last year was 147. A charge is generally made for membership in these adult study groups. Whatever fee is paid, however, is always returned in the form of current literature which is distributed to the members of the group in the hope that, by the end of the year, they will have become sufficiently interested to continue their own personal subscriptions. In this way, one year the Menorah Journal was received by every member in the group, another year the Jewish Daily Bulletin. During the current year it is planned to distribute the Reconstructionist. When Margolis and Marx "History of the Jews" appeared, it was distributed during that particular year even though there was not sufficient money received from the nominal registration fees to pay for it. The synagogue treasury paid the difference. Needless to say, the first books distributed under this plan were the Bible of the Jewish Publication Society, and the Standard Prayer Book in successive years.

### b. The Extensive Program

Side by side with this intensive adult curriculum, there developed an extensive curriculum consisting of public lectures once a month. This part of the program is distinctive in many ways. For 13 years there was a lecture by a visiting speaker each month between Simhas Torah and Passover. With the exception of the International Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. who talked on Jewish conditions in Central Europe and Professor Montgomery of the University of Pennsylvania, every lecturer was a Jew and the subjects were distinctly Jewish. No effort is made to attract masses and no speaker is heralded because he is an orator, even though he may be one. Stress is continually laid upon the Jewish subject matter and the authority of the speaker to discuss that subject. The subjects are selected first, and then the most authoritative person to discuss it is obtained. For this reason there is missing from the list of these lecturers, some names who are known far and wide as brilliant orators, but the content of whose lectures is not equalled by their oratory. On the other hand, there were invited for a public lecture on this program some men who were then obscure but who today are known far and wide as prominent public lecturers. In the last two years these public lectures were conducted with the cooperation of the Seminary Institute for Jewish Affairs. This association proved a most happy one.

The extent to which a taste for real serious Jewish knowledge was developed in this community is evidenced by the titles of some of the lectures: "The Evolution of the Jewish Religion," "The Formulation of the Mishnah," "Some Medieval Hebrew Scholars," "From the World's Greatest Jewish Library," "The Philosophy of the Pharisees," "The History of Jewish Marriage." Each year there was presented one item in the field of Jewish art, Jewish music, or the Jewish Theatre. A few members of the Habimah Theatre were heard in a recital of biblical passages in Hebrew. Incidentally, such a program brought about sufficient interest in Jewish art that Reuben Leaf, the Jewish artist, was engaged to design and produce some original silver for at least one of our Scrolls.

This department is self-supporting. Because of the large number that attend these lectures, it is possible for people to

attend them for a nominal sum. The first group of lectures in 1922-23 was attended by such a small number that a charge of $5.00 for a series of six lectures was necessary to cover the cost. Last year the numbers were so large that $1.00 for the whole course was sufficient to pay for it. Tickets are not peddled nor are competitions conducted. The course is advertised in a reserved dignified manner and people come and pay at the door.

As evidence of the developed interest in more serious Jewish reading and studying on the part of this group, we submit the not uninteresting fact that in spite of its cost and serious content, 22 of this group purchased Professor Kaplan's "Judaism As A Civilization." This year the book will form one of the subjects studied in the intensive study groups.

### The Religious School

From the very outset it was determined that there was to be no Sunday School. No children were to be permitted to come on Sunday who were not willing to attend at least two other sessions in the middle of the week. It is a matter of more than passing interest to call attention to the fact that for over a year the debate waxed hot among the leaders of the congregation as to whether there was to be a Sunday School or a daily school, or a Sunday School in addition to a daily school. No compromise however was offered on the part of those who felt the inadequacy of a Sunday School even though there would be mid-week Hebrew instruction in addition to it. Sunday is only one of the minimum of three days that children are expected to attend. This point was basic. It was a hard fought issue because a large number of children attending the Orthodox Talmud Torah went to the Reform Sunday School. Many people, therefore, in the interests of the congregation felt that it would be of advantage to have both a Sunday School and a week-day school of its own.

Another matter of grave importance that had to be decided at the very outset was the problem of the teaching staff. Shall teachers be obtained down to a price and make it easy to raise the small amount required by charging low tuition fees? Or shall a highly expert, thoroughly professionally trained and well experienced staff be engaged, pay the higher salaries which such a staff would naturally command, and then find ways and means of raising the money for it? It is a matter of surpassing interest that without any hesitancy whatsoever the latter alternative was selected. Two years of work in ordering Religious Services and Adult Education work made the people feel that in matters of Jewish spiritual life as in secular affairs you get no more than what you pay for. Accordingly, the Teachers Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary was called upon to provide the required faculty of professional Hebrew teachers who must also have had an American training and whose exclusive source of earning a livelihood would be the salary that they would receive from teaching in the school. The original male teachers recommended are still on the staff. One of them has been teaching here for 10 years and another for eight. That has, however, not been the case with the women teachers. Due to a social problem which arises in so small a community as this is, it is more difficult to keep women teachers for longer than two years. They always feel themselves limited in their social contacts and find little outlet for their intellectual interests. It is altogether different with the men who have families of their own.

To meet these requirements tuition fee has been set at $70 a year per child, $125 for two children in one family, and $150 for three children in one family. This tuition fee is payable in 10 monthly payments. This method has been found very satisfactory. The school has grown in the last 10 years from an enrollment of 23 to 169. At first, the one group that formed the school at the beginning, met at the Y.M.H.A. building where Religious Services were held before the Temple building was erected. The next step was a

group of three small rooms that were built for school purposes in the Vestry Rooms. As the school developed, these accommodations made in the Vestry Rooms became inadequate, and five years later there was erected a special school building—a three story fire-proof building containing play rooms, library, cloak rooms, a faculty room, office space in addition to six spacious classrooms, with provision for easy further expansion.

The youngest pupil in the school is four and the oldest is 18. They are divided into the following departments: (1) Pre-School age department for little tots below the age of six. They meet only on Sunday morning and their curriculum centers around the holidays of the year. They are not part of our School Registration. (2) The elementary School consisting of children between the ages of 6 and 14. (3) The High School consisting of students between 14 and 18. The High School students, like the elementary school students, meet three times a week. The summer school is a separate unit which is conducted from the day after Independence Day until the third Friday in August. Teachers meetings are held every Thursday afternoon. At these meetings the progress of the week is checked up and plans for the coming week are laid. Items relating to both curriculum and attendance are discussed. In this way constant control is kept of the School.

### The Night School

As a result of the interest in Jewish education that was developed in the older High School students and the encouragement they received from their parents, it was found necessary to provide courses for those High School graduates who do not leave for college. In response to this demand, the Night School was organized. It meets twice a week for one hour each time. The tuition fee is the same as prevails in Bucknell College which has a branch in this city, and whose standards of measurements are used in the Night School. This course is a text course, and assigned home work is reasonably well prepared.

### The College Students

The constantly increasing number of young people from the congregation who are away to college has been the object of a great deal of attention on the part of the Trustees. As long as their numbers were small, contact with them was maintained by sending them weekly letters. Once a year, during the midwinter vacation, when most of them are home, a college night is arranged on a Friday evening and at least six students from various colleges discuss some problem of the Jewish college student. Their discussions are summarized and interpreted by some lay man or woman who has interest in college students and their problems. Generally there are present at this gathering practically all the Jewish students in the community who are home, whether they are members of the congregation or not. Following this discussion, the Sisterhood tenders a reception to the visiting students. This is always an informative and a socially brilliant affair. For those students who are compelled to remain at college during the various Jewish Holidays, arrangements are made to have them provided not only with a place in which to worship but also frequently to have them invited to some Jewish homes. This is done with the cooperation of the Seminary graduates who are located in or near the various college communities. The experience with the readiness of such cooperation has been most happy.

This year the number of college students reached 55. The Board of Trustees recognized the responsibility which they owe to these college students, and that merely providing them with Jewish contacts during the High Holydays, keeping in contact with them by means of weekly letters, and receiving them officially once a year is not sufficient. Accordingly, a sufficient sum was voted to enable the rabbi to make a pastoral tour of all college folks, visit them in their colleges and in their fraternities and spend with them as long

as he feels it necessary. This is probably the first such experiment made by any congregation. A least, it is unique and shows the extent to which the Board of Trustees bear responsibility for the spiritual needs of the young people.

### Responsibility for Jewish Scholarship

So vital is the cause of Jewish scholarship to Temple Israel that their contributions to it are made generously and in a most dignified form. From the very first year of its existence a sum of money is raised each year, known as the General Distribution Fund, to be used toward the furtherance of those Jewish cultural causes both here and abroad that do not have field representatives and may not even appeal for funds though badly needed. This fund contributed, for example, toward the printing of Kosawsky's *"Ozar L'shon Hamishna"* and other similar works. It helped finance magazines of Jewish cultural interest which are unable to maintain themselves by subscription. It shares in Falasha work. For the first number of years this fund provided a scholarship to the Seminary every year in the amount of $250. During the last few years, the Trustees feel their association to the Seminary to be so intimate that the Seminary has been put on the salary list and has been receiving regular monthly checks in the same manner as salaries are being paid. The Seminary appropriation is as much part of the budget as are salaries. It is interesting that such a relationship to the Seminary moves some of the members to contribute personally in a generous way to the Seminary in addition to the Synagogue's contribution, although no individuals are being solicited.

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# Mr. Lewisohn's Misdirected Zeal

*By* Ira Eisenstein

ABOUT ten years ago Ludwig Lewisohn, who has just issued an anthology of modern Jewish thought entitled "Rebirth,"* experienced a remarkable conversion to Jewishness. That conversion transformed him into a zealot endowed with passionate sincerity and glowing eloquence. He has written many volumes about himself in relation to the problem of being a Jew, and he has generalized a good deal from that searing experience of his repentance. He has studied diligently and has acquired much Jewish learning. When he writes, there is a breathless sweep and a firm brilliance to his prose. His mastery of the language has made him the envy of most American non-Jewish writers. When he speaks, therefore, to American Jewry and to the public at large, his words carry weight.

Mr. Lewisohn, however, is typical of the repentant sinner of whom the rabbis said, in effect, that they rush in where the habitually righteous men fear to tread. Mr. Lewisohn suffers from a misdirected zeal; we venture to demonstrate some of the dangers of Mr. Lewisohn's zeal.

What specifically do we object to in Mr. Lewisohn's approach? Primarily, his conception of the mystic unity, in time and space, of the whole Jewish people and its culture. His thesis borders dangerously upon pseudo-scientific race theories. Influenced, perhaps, by the psychoanalytics of Jung, he presupposes the persistence, in the Jewish blood stream, of an attitude toward life, which has not changed from biblical days to our own, and which renders it absolutely futile for any Jew ever really to share any other philosophy and be normal.

He ascribes the same kind of changeless blood stream to the European pagans

*Harper & Bros., N. Y., 1935.

who tried to be Christian and failed—or perhaps never tried. For example, Lewisohn maintains that the biblical ordinance to love one's neighbor as oneself could never have been formulated by any other civilization; and besides, "the pagan cannot understand that (ordinance), and the Jew, though he may never have read those words of the Torah, can understand *nothing else.*" The pagan, in other words, may perhaps accept the ordinance, in a moment of apparent conversion, but he will ultimately slip back to his paganism; he is utterly irredeemable. While the Jew may lust after pagan violence and hate, but ultimately he will revert to his ancestral identity, his historic memory will be reawakened and, propelled by the mysterious impulse, he will shout *"Shema Yisrael."*

According to Mr. Lewisohn, this conversion or reversion can be deliberately effected. Any Jew can do it if he follows instructions. "You must descend into the depth of your own being in stillness. When you are perfectly still and perfectly passive and have excluded all the troubling and distracting noises of the world and all its strivings and preoccupations, you will find that the core of your being is Jewish, that your soul is the soul of a Jew, freighted with half-conscious racial and historic memories, reacting in the very deeps of it in a manner which has not changed through the revolving ages and therefore allied forever with the deeps of the Jewish soul everywhere and always."

What is more, this conversion will cure you of any traces of paganism, such as hate and greed and violence. You will hear a call, "and from that call . . . will arise a spirit of humility and love. For you too desire, although you may not know it, to burst the bonds of merely selfish living within the frozen chambers of your heart; you too desire to die in order truly to live; you too desire to serve and to love; and descending to the very depths and sources of your being you will see that it is inhuman and impossible to love an abstract humanity and to love without relation or discrimination, and you will find that *your* way of loving mankind is to love the Jewish people and your way of serving mankind is to serve Israel." This love will be of the highest order; it will not degenerate into or have any relation "with anything that has to do with chauvinism or belligerent exclusiveness of the other nations."

This reversion makes you different, obviously, from the rest of the world. But Mr. Lewisohn insists that, while the various nations differ from one another, the Jews differ from all of them *more* than any of them differ from each other. The Jewish people enjoys a "higher uniqueness than that of any one of the western peoples, differing more from all of them than each of them differs from the other." Quite an achievement; but not our doing. This was ordained in the beginning of days, when the basic nature of the Jewish people was created. To this day it has not changed; history has not affected it. And if we want to solve our problem we must find a solution compatible with that nature which is inherent in our own being.

To insist as Mr. Lewisohn does that the Jewish people constitute a race is to preach dangerous doctrine. The concept is fraught with the same dynamite that exploded in Germany and destroyed the house of Israel there. Certainly, Lewisohn makes it perfectly clear that he accepts this fantastic idea when he insists that a Jew need only contemplate his Jewish navel, and he will pierce through all the centuries and perceive the essential validity of a biblical command to love one's neighbor. What else are these but Nazified notions? Similarly, when he insists that the pagans can never understand the command, he fortifies the Nazis in their maniacal belief in their uniqueness. "Of course," they say, "loving the stranger is only a Jewish idea, abnormal, insane, and luckily confined only to a very small portion of humanity. We pagans, Germans, who have succeeded

in throwing off the spell of these Jewish fakirs, must now consider it our sacred duty to reconvert the whole world to paganism."

A corollary of this idea is that the Jewish people's history is the embodiment in the life of the people of an unchanging and eternal essence.

Such an idea contradicts the whole evolutionary conception of our history and falsifies it. There were periods in our history when there were no prophets; periods when the message of the prophets was ignored or forgotten. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Jews had more in common with the western peoples than they both had in common with the Chinese. They shared essentially the same world outlook; their differences were theological, and in an age that took theology seriously, all the other differences followed. Israel might very easily have disappeared during the Middle Ages if they had been willing to accept a new set of dogmas. Those eternal and inherent qualities might have been lost altogether.

The false implication is that when one becomes aware of the fact that one is a Jew, one suddenly becomes practically an angel, without hate and without chauvinism. It is just too bad that this is not the case; Palestine today would be better off if all Jews there, knowing they are Jews, would reform and stop speculating in real estate.

Another danger of Mr. Lewisohn's race theories lies in the pessimism which they inevitably spell. He asks, how shall the Jew dwell in a pagan world? Obviously, if these pagans are damned forever, nothing will help the Jews but complete abandonment of the diaspora. As many as possible should crowd into Palestine—and the rest? I guess the rest might just as well commit hara-kiri. If as Mr. Lewisohn contends, the western world hates the Jew because he is unique, because his unchanging philosophy of human life conflicts with the dominant one, becoming converted will only infuriate the western world all the more. Assimilation is impossible; reconciliation is impossible.

These are dangerous doctrines. Mr. Lewisohn may mean perfectly well, but he makes matters worse by his mystical zeal. The crux of the fallacy in this thinking lies in his misconception of Jewish "otherness." "Otherness" denotes merely the otherness of a social and cultural entity, which is comparable to the otherness which human personalities reveal. Essentially, the ideals of the Jewish people are, at their best, identical with the ideals of the best in all other civilizations. We are all human; German, Jewish, Chinese, Negro are human beings, with potentialities for good. Violence and hatred, and the oppression of the stranger are the byproducts of sociological conditions. When conditions require, Jews can be vicious and blind like the rest. This truth Mr. Lewisohn completely ignores.

We can well understand that in the first glow of Mr. Lewisohn's self-realization, he should become the victim of exaggerated notions of what it means to be a Jew, but he is far too talented and too important a man to permit his growth to stop at this point. It is evident that he has saturated himself with a knowledge of the Jewish past, but he has not yet succeeded in establishing the proper perspective toward that past. The necessary objectivity and scientific understanding which will enable him to re-interpret that past so that his interest in Jewish life may be transformed into a program for the future, can only be achieved through further study in the fields of comparative religion and in the psychology of religion, and if Mr. Lewisohn's zeal is not diminished as his vision broadens and his understanding deepens, he will prove to be one of our most valued leaders.